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# Food & Nutrition

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## A Look at Food Stamp Changes

Changes in food stamp procedures will affect millions of people. This article takes a look at major changes mandated by the Food Stamp Act of 1977. **Page 2**



## Food Service-Serving Kids and the Elderly, too

Elderly New Englanders are heading back to school in some communities. They're eating with students, and sometimes working with them, in ways that benefit old and young alike. **Page 6**

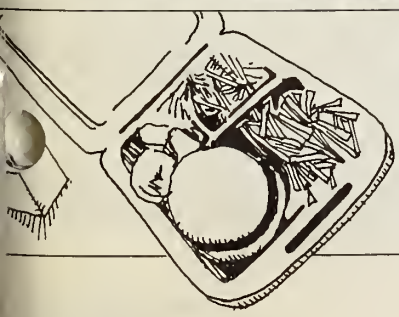
Older folks help prepare summer meals

Schools open their lunchroom doors

Students prepare meals, get valuable training

## Breakfast for Energy

Eat breakfast for energy. That's a message kids and their parents will be hearing a lot this fall. In Rockbridge, Ga., parents reinforce that message by joining their children for breakfast at school. **Page 10**



## Tennessee Schools Prepare Summer Meals

Use schools to prepare summer meals? It just makes sense, say school food service people in Washington County, Tenn. Last summer they prepared meals for children at six recreation sites. **Page 13**

# A Look at Food Stamp Changes



**FOOD  
STAMPS**

Millions of people will be finding changes in their food stamp benefits, as new Food Stamp Program procedures go into effect across the country. The new procedures are mandated by the Food Stamp Act of 1977, enacted last fall.

Through several significant reforms, the Food Stamp Act restructures the program to make sure food stamps get to the people who need them most—elderly people who are living on fixed incomes, and other families and individuals with very low incomes.

The law also makes other reforms designed to make it easier for people to be informed about the program, to apply for benefits, and, if they qualify, be certified.

In the following pages, we explain some of the most important changes in the program and take a look at how they will affect people.



Two changes will have the greatest impact

Two major changes will have the greatest impact. One will redirect

food stamp benefits to people at the lower end of the income scale. The other will make the program more accessible to the very poor.

The new procedures will lower income eligibility levels and change the way net income is figured. As a result, people with lower incomes will be getting additional benefits, while people with higher incomes will either lose some benefits or no longer be eligible for the program.

This past May about 16 million people were using food stamps. A little more than 5 million of these people will be finding increases in their food stamp benefits as the new procedures go into effect. At the same time, about 3 million people will be finding their benefits reduced, and another 1.3 million people will be dropped from the program altogether.

In addition, the new procedures will eliminate the requirement that people purchase part of their food stamp allotments. Since the Food Stamp Program began, most people have had to use some of their own money to get food stamps. Each month, they would pay a certain amount, depending on their income and other considerations. In return, they would get back food stamps worth more than they had paid.

Under the new procedures, people will no longer purchase food stamps. They will simply get roughly what used to be their "bonus." A family which used to pay \$50 for \$150 in food stamps, for example, will pay nothing and get \$100 in food stamps.

Under the new procedures, some families will find their total allotment does not equal the amount of "bonus" stamps they received under the old program. However, that will be because of the lower income eligibility levels and the way in which net income is figured—not because of the elimination of the purchase requirement.

The elimination of the purchase requirement is one of the most significant reforms made in the program. By removing the barrier that has prevented some of the very poor from participating—namely, the cash outlay needed for stamps—this reform is expected to open the program to over 3 million needy people.

Almost 45 percent of these new participants are expected to come from the South, where the percentage of people living below the poverty level—15.3 percent of the population—is the highest in the country.



#### **Food stamps will be more accessible**

Several other changes are designed to make it easier for qualified people to use food stamps. Here are some examples:

- USDA will be providing States with a new and simple form for people to fill out when applying for food stamps.
  - Interview procedures will be more flexible. People who can't make it to the certification office because they are old or disabled may be interviewed by mail, telephone, or home visits.
  - People who are destitute will have their food stamps expedited.
  - People who are collecting Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) as well as food stamps will find that the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare are working together.
- A single interview will determine whether or not people are eligible for benefits under both programs, and re-certifications for both programs will be timed to coincide.
- People who apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) will be able to submit applications for food stamp benefits at the same office.

For people to apply for the program, they must first know it is available. Outreach will continue to be an important part of the new program.

The new legislation requires States to "inform low-income households about the availability, eligibility requirements and benefits of the Food Stamp Program."

The new law also requires States to notify recipients of SSI, AFDC, and unemployment compensation about the Food Stamp Program. And it requires States to distribute instructions for filling out application forms and details on the kinds of documentation needed to verify household income.

To meet the special needs of people who don't speak English, the law requires States to use bilingual caseworkers and bilingual material in areas where there are substantial numbers of non-English speaking people.



#### **Eligibility will be determined in new ways**

To qualify for food stamps, all households must meet certain financial and nonfinancial criteria. The financial criteria include an income test.

Under the new program, the income test will be based on the Federal poverty guidelines set by the Office of Management and Budget and adjusted annually. For the period ending April 1979, a family of four must have a net income of no more than \$6,500 to qualify for food stamps. Net income is the amount

of income the family has after subtracting deductions.

Until now, income limits have been based on guidelines set by the Secretary of Agriculture. These limits were higher than the Federal poverty levels, and they did not apply to people who had no income other than public assistance or Supplemental Security Income. These people were eligible even if their incomes exceeded these limits. The income limits for the new program will apply to everyone.

In addition to new lower income limits, the Food Stamp Program will have a new system of standardized deductions. Under the old system, households were allowed to claim numerous deductions from their gross (or total) income.

Now there are only three allowable deductions, as shown in the chart on page 4.

**A standard deduction.** All households will get to subtract a standard amount. This amount will be adjusted twice a year to reflect changes in the cost of living. The standard deduction is currently set at \$60.

**An earned income deduction.** Working households will also get to subtract 20 percent from their total monthly earned income. This is to make up for taxes and other mandatory deductions, for example, Social Security.

**A maximum deduction for actual dependent care and excess shelter costs.** Households will also be able to subtract up to \$80 for actual dependent care, excess shelter costs (explained below), or both. Households will qualify for this deduction if:

1. They have to pay someone to care for a dependent in order for a person in the household to accept a job, seek employment in compli-

# How to Figure Net Income Using the New Deductions

Under the new food stamp procedures, there are three deductions:

A standard \$60 deduction for all households.

A deduction of 20 percent of earned income.

An \$80 maximum deduction for actual dependent care and excess shelter costs.

Here is a case example of a family of four:

The family's gross monthly income includes the following:

\$200 in wages (earned income)  
\$205 in public assistance

Their monthly expenses include:  
\$150 in housing costs  
\$ 40 in child care

To figure the family's net income:

- 1 Subtract 20 percent from their earned income
 

\$200
-40
<hr/> 160
- 2 Add in their other income (public assistance)
 

\$160
+205
<hr/> 365
- 3 Subtract the \$60 standard deduction
 

365
-60
<hr/> 305
- 4 Subtract their child care costs (Remember, there is an \$80 maximum for child care *and* housing costs. So, if the family were to claim \$80 for child care, they would have reached the maximum for this deduction.)
 

305
-40
<hr/> 265

 adjusted income
- 5 To figure how much can be deducted for excess shelter costs, take the adjusted income mentioned above and divide it in half.
 

$\$265 \div 2 = 132.50$
-------------------------
- 6 Then subtract that figure from the household's total housing costs
 

\$150
-132.50
<hr/> 17.50

 excess shelter costs
- 7 Finally, subtract the excess shelter costs from the adjusted income
 

\$265
-17.50
<hr/> \$247.50

 net income

The household's net income is \$247.50 after all the deductions have been made from their gross income. The household's net income would then be compared to the income guidelines to see if the household qualifies for food stamps.

ance with job search requirements, continue working, or take a training course leading to a job. This deduction applies to costs for child care as well as care for incapacitated adults.

2. Their monthly shelter costs exceed 50 percent of their **net income**. Shelter costs include: rent, mortgage payments, including interest, or other charges leading to ownership; utility payments; property taxes; the cost of insurance on a home. Shelter costs also include costs for homes not currently occupied because of employment or disaster.

The maximum amount households can claim for both dependent care and excess shelter costs is \$80. In other words, households subtracting \$65 a month for dependent care can deduct only \$15 more for high shelter costs.

This maximum amount of \$80 will be adjusted annually to reflect changes in the cost of shelter, fuel, and utilities.

The new system of deductions, in effect, sets a limit on the gross income a food stamp household can have. **To qualify for the new program, a family of four can have a gross income of no more than \$10,225 a year or \$852 a month.**



**Accountability  
will be improved;  
administration  
simplified**

Besides making the program more accessible to the people it is

designed to serve, many of the new changes will improve program administration and accountability.

In addition to making it easier for eligible people to use food stamps, doing away with the purchase requirement will make the program easier to administer and less subject to fraud.

It will reduce by \$3 billion the amount of food stamps in circulation, and eliminate opportunities for abuses by those agencies which collect cash for the U.S. Government.

It will also result in considerable savings in staff time for the State agencies which administer the program. Doing away with the purchase requirement is expected to save States 40 million staff hours a year.

The new system of deductions will simplify income eligibility calculations, thus reducing the risk of caseworker errors.

In addition to these changes, the new program will also include other features aimed at improving administration. For instance, in accordance with the law:

- USDA will set standards for the maximum number of cases an eligi-

bility worker can handle. States will be responsible for providing continuing and comprehensive training for these employees.

- As an incentive for States to improve administration, USDA will pay an additional 10 percent of States' administrative costs if they reduce their overall error rate to below 5 percent.

At the same time, Federal money for administrative costs will be withheld from States failing to meet program standards without good cause. A State may be required to pay for food stamps which were improperly issued if the State has been negligent or has committed fraud.

- For people using food stamps, there will be tougher work requirements and stricter penalties for fraud.

People who are physically and mentally fit and between the ages of 18 and 60 must not only register for work but must actively look for a job. Students over 18 will also be required to register for 20 hours work a week.

People who are found guilty of fraud by an administrative hearing will be dropped from the Food Stamp Program for 3 months. People found guilty of fraud by the courts may be dropped for up to 24 months.

- Finally, States will be given more money by the Federal Government to investigate and prosecute fraud. States will now be reimbursed for at least 75 percent of these costs. Previously, this was limited to 50 percent of costs.

*by Dianne Jenkins*

# Food Service- Serving Kids and the Elderly, too

**The old help the young. The young help the old. And everyone seems to benefit. That's what's happening in these New England communities, where people saw ways the child nutrition programs could help the elderly and vice versa.**

**In Providence, Rhode Island, senior citizens help prepare meals for the summer food service program. Hired by the city recreation department, the elderly get to earn some extra money while helping the city provide nourishing meals to area youngsters.**

**In Scituate, another Rhode Island community, the local elementary school has opened its lunchroom doors to the senior citizens club. Members meet at school twice a week for specially prepared meals and social activities. Scituate Elementary and six other Rhode Island schools now prepare meals for over 1,000 elderly people on a regular basis.**

**In Greater Lawrence, Massachusetts, the idea is similar. School facilities are community resources, so why not use them to the fullest? Here, however, there's an added twist. Students at the Regional Vocational Technical High School prepare meals for the elderly, getting valuable training while providing a needed service.**

## Older folks help prepare summer meals

"I know I make good sandwiches," said Julius Schwartz, who at a young 91, was working again for Providence, Rhode Island's summer food service program for children. Julius, who lives in one of the city's seven public housing projects for the elderly, worked as many as 6

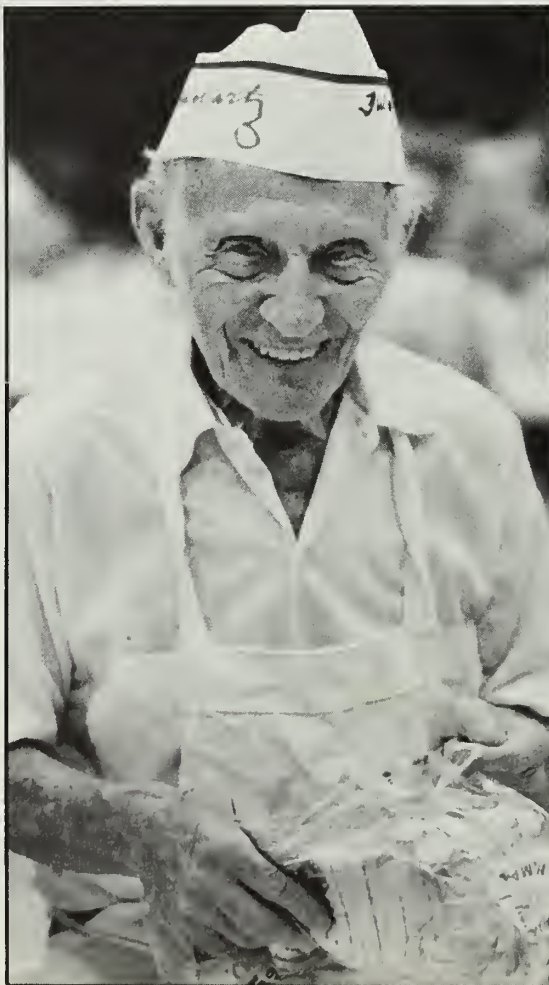
days a week last summer making sandwiches for the program.

Julius and 30 other senior citizens were hired by the city's recreation department. They were paid \$2.65 an hour plus transportation to the meal preparation kitchen at the Bridgeham Middle School. Together they made over 5,000 sandwiches a day for the children at the city's playgrounds.

### Dedicated to their jobs

Louis Santiano, director of Providence's recreation department, expects to hire more seniors in the future.

"Their contribution to the overall success of the program cannot be overemphasized," he said. "The



Last summer, Julius Schwartz made over 5,000 sandwiches for Providence youngsters.

city's program was expanded from 7 to 40 feeding sites this year, and much of the credit has to be given to the elderly, who were totally dedicated to their jobs."

Santiano, together with Ara Boghigian, executive director for the Providence public housing authority, shared the idea to get the elderly involved. They hope to gradually expand the program to serve an estimated 23,000 children.

"We're making plans now," Boghigian said, "to get additional lunch sites, and the senior residents of the city are central to plans for growth."

### A relatively new feature

The elderly's involvement with the program is relatively new. The summer before last was the first year Providence hired the elderly, in an arrangement planned to enable the city to take on responsibility for meal preparation. Previously, the city had hired commercial caterers to prepare the meals.

Ara Boghigian recounted the reason for the change: "We felt the city could put together its resources to provide a high-quality lunch, while offering Providence's elderly people the chance to earn a few dollars and help the kids. It worked.

"We were also able to plow back surplus funds into bigger sandwiches and more fresh fruit," he added.

In setting up the new arrangement, program coordinators took into account the special needs of the elderly. For example, because some people expressed interest in working fewer days than others, the city does not require all elderly employees to work the same number of days.

There are also special provisions for those with disabilities. Younger workers lift heavy objects, like 50-pound boxes of apples, and deliver sandwiches, cartons of milk, and fresh fruit to the sites. Many of the younger workers are hired through CETA, the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act.

### State monitors attend training

Dave Andreozzi of Rhode Island's office of School Food Services sa

the State staff worked closely with the city to help initiate the program.

State monitors participated in the city's pre-program training during the winter months, and attended weekly meetings in Providence throughout the summer.

Andreozzi sees the elderly's involvement as a strong part of the program. "The elderly work with top-notch food service people," he said, "and we expect even more senior citizens to take part in 1979." *by Dennis Shimkoski*

## Schools open their lunchroom doors

The Scituate Rhode Island Senior Citizens Club had a problem, so the president of the group, Rose Clarke, got together with recreation coordinator Helen Laporte to do something about it.

"We had no place in town where members could eat lunch together and share a song or two," said Rose Clarke. "Then Donald Driscoll dropped in during one of our meetings and suggested that we ask the school superintendent to let us use the school."

Driscoll is Rhode Island's deputy commissioner of education. Since last fall he's been visiting schools and senior citizens groups to drum up support for the new Senior Citizens Lunch Program, a cooperative effort of the Department of Education and the Department of Elderly Affairs. Headed by Anne Cornell of the Office of School Food Services, the program enlists both elementary and secondary schools to prepare and serve meals to the elderly.

Both Driscoll and Cornell accompanied Rose Clarke and Helen Laporte to the school superintendent's office, but apparently the superintendent needed little coaxing. "He was very enthusiastic about using the elementary school for the spe-

cial elderly feeding program," says Anne Cornell.

### Now meet regularly

The Scituate Senior Citizens now meet regularly for lunch at the elementary school. Every Monday and Wednesday they dine in the school cafeteria soon after the youngsters have eaten and returned to their classes.

The club has 157 paid members—many of them come to every school luncheon. Those who cannot afford the one dollar charge receive a reduced rate through the club. As a special service, members deliver lunches to elderly people who cannot leave their homes.

According to club leaders, the seniors have nothing but praise for the menu. "The food is great," is a typical comment, and indeed, plate waste is nonexistent.

### Schools use special menus

Scituate is one of the seven Rhode Island schools now preparing meals for the elderly. Some serve meals inside the cafeterias,

either during the students' regular lunch hour, or afterwards if there isn't enough space. Others utilize community centers. In either case, food is prepared by school food service people who follow special menu plans.

Anne Cornell obtains the special menus several weeks in advance from the Department of Elderly Affairs. She orders food on bid from the Central Warehouse Division of Purchasing. After delivery to the warehouse, the food for the elderly is shipped along with the food for the students, but it is billed separately.

Although the shipments combine food for the elderly with food for the students, each of the seven sites prepares the food to suit the needs of the senior citizens. Sometimes school menus for the students simply do not meet the dietary requirements for the older generation.

However, there is some crossover, says Robert Kaveny, program business manager in the State Office of School Food Services. "Every so often a youngster will request a serving of something which was



The school cafeteria is a popular gathering place for the Scituate Senior Citizens' Club. After lunch, Rose Clarke plays some favorite songs.

prepared with the elderly in mind."

The elderly pay extra for their meals. Across the State, full price lunches for secondary students are 55 cents each, and 50 cents for elementary children. The seniors pay the regular adult price of one dollar. When meals are delivered to shut-ins through the meals-on-wheels program, or through another source, each meal costs \$1.25.

### **Scituate's extra services**

The Scituate program offers senior citizens some special features. Every other week, club members hold general business meetings at the nearby Community House, but they do not have to go without lunch.

The school delivers sandwiches, milk, orange juice, and coffee. For convenience, club members use majority rule to choose one kind of sandwich for all.

On the days the seniors eat at the Scituate Elementary School, they are welcome to linger after lunch. Rose Clarke often takes advantage of the school's piano and knocks out tunes like a professional.

An open space in the cafeteria is transformed into a dance floor. "My son teaches us line dancing," said Alvin Dunne, vice president of the club. "Every so often, he'll come in to teach us new steps. We can even do the Hustle."

### **Program is popular**

Dunne said that all are quite satisfied with the program. "Whether older townspeople are members of our club or not, we are trying to get everyone involved."

Virginia Murdock, school food service supervisor for the Scituate area, agrees that the program is working well. "The people really enjoy it," she said. "And, it looks like the program will be greatly expanded to serve more people on more days."

Anne Cornell hopes the program will be expanded throughout the State.

"The seniors enjoy it, school administrators support it, and the cooperation we are receiving from

the students is fantastic," she says. When schools are in session, students volunteer to clean cafeterias, set up tables, hang coats, and serve seniors needing extra help.

Cornell sums up the program philosophy nicely. "For years, these senior citizens have been paying taxes for the schools. The program helps them get something back. They don't have kids going to school, but many have grandchildren. You might say the program brings the generations together."

*by Dennis Shimkoski*

## **Students prepare meals, get valuable training**

Chief instructor Bob Kennedy is strict with the 36 ninth graders who work in the culinary arts program. And he should be. These students have major responsibility for servicing Massachusetts' largest nutrition program for the elderly. Each day, the students prepare and distribute over 1,500 meals to senior citizens at 19 sites.

In Massachusetts, as in other States, nutrition programs for the elderly provide meals and companionship to thousands of people. The meals are served in congregate settings, like community centers or churches. They are also delivered to the people who are housebound.

The nutrition programs are funded by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, and administered by State agencies. They get donated food assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

In Greater Lawrence, the Regional Vocational Technical High School plays a key role in the food service. In fact, the school has one of the country's three largest programs in which students use educational training facilities exclusively to prepare meals for the elderly.

### **Students get valuable training**

From a teacher's perspective, one of the most valuable aspects of the food service is the extensive training experience it gives students.

In essence, it is a "crash-course" orientation to the food service industry, with students rotating responsibility for preparation, distribution, inventory control and other related food service operations. Many students will eventually enter related "inplant" food service industry careers.

The first year of the culinary arts program provides experience covering a wide range of food service skills. The next 2 years focus on refining those skills. The fourth and final year is a cooperatively run work-study project in which students often receive their choice of job placements. "We're placing our students in good jobs throughout the food service industry," boasts food coordinator Ed Coakley.

### **Operates in a classroom**

The food service operates in a converted classroom, with its own



Dennis Bouchard, teaching supervisor, shows students how to use the food slicing equipment.

separate set of facilities and equipment. There, students prepare about 1,500 meals a day. 1,100 are for the 19 project sites, most of which are community centers and churches, and about 400 are for the "meals-on-wheels" programs. These home-delivered meals reach community residents who are unable to come to the sites.

In addition to specially preparing meals for home delivery, the students also prepare about 100 special diet meals for people on low-sodium diets, and snack type meals for those whose diets require several small portions each day.

### Elderly often take part

Elderly community members are encouraged to take part in the actual operation of the program. And some do.

For example, each of the seven vans currently used for delivery and transportation services is staffed and driven by a local senior citizen. Two of the vans are fully equipped for use in social services, while the others are equipped for a combination of functions.

In most cases, individual sites provide the facilities for assembling meals. Additional volunteers prepare the food packages at the sites and make individual home delivery of meals to the housebound.

Regardless of the type of meal, the program suggests a 50-cent donation. Although payments for all meals are left to individual discretion, almost 85 percent of the participants choose to make the full contribution.

### State and local agencies help

Like other people working with nutrition programs for the elderly, people in Greater Lawrence get guidance from both State and local agencies. The Massachusetts Department of Elderly Affairs provides technical assistance and guidance, visiting all meal sites in the State at least once every 2 weeks.

"This gives us an opportunity to see what we're doing right as well as to correct any problems," says Karen Porter, State project director.

For the Lawrence students, these visits sometimes mean opportunities to meet and talk with the State

people. The students use State guidelines in planning menus. Together with the dietary technology students, the culinary arts students plan menus 4 weeks in advance, and submit them to the State for approval.

In health and safety matters, the school gets additional guidance from the local board of health, which conducts monthly instructional programs for all the ninth graders involved in preparing meals for the elderly.

### A tradition of service

The people at the Regional Vocational Technical High School are proud of their record of service to the elderly.

For several years, the school operated an informal hot lunch program for elderly local residents through the school's Four Winds Coffee Shop, a combination training restaurant and faculty dining room. Since the school started the new training program, the Four Winds Coffee Shop has discontinued the special service to the elderly, but is still open to the public one day a week.

In addition, the school continues its 10-year tradition of sponsoring an annual summer barbecue for local senior citizens. Complete with entertainment, the barbecue is a popular and well-publicized event that everyone looks forward to—seniors, students, and staff members. It is also another example of the school's commitment to the elderly.

Says food coordinator Edward Coakley, "We've always had a good track record of commitment to community service, and we still enjoy this type of work."

*by Richard Stoller*



Tenth grade student Najat Hasham packs lunches for delivery to the housebound.

With preparation complete, driver Thomas Begley helps students load one of the seven delivery vans.

# Breakfast for Energy



Parents are likely to be pleasantly surprised this fall by a bright and bouncy food commercial designed to teach their children the value of a healthful breakfast.

The 30-second spot, developed by the Food and Nutrition Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is being distributed free to television stations across the United States for use in observing National School Lunch Week, October 8-14.

The product the spot is pushing is good nutrition. But this is no mini-sermon to be tuned out by kid viewers. As a catchy tune celebrates breakfast for energy, gym sequences filmed in a real school provide the exhilarating counterpoint.

We all flip for breakfast—  
*go the lyrics—*

Breakfast is a treat!

Eat at school for energy

From your head down to your feet.

The same message will be reinforced by a nationwide campaign headed by the National Parent-

Teacher Association, which has made child nutrition a top priority goal. In a variety of ways, parents and teachers will be working to make sure that as many children as possible enjoy a nourishing breakfast and lunch at home or at school.

Where families lack the time or the income to insure that their children have a balanced diet, school nutrition programs are especially vital.

Both the campaign and the public service advertisement encourage children and parents to improve their eating habits and to support and take advantage of school nutrition programs.

When school starts this fall, a lot more kids may be eating the kind of diet that means a flying start on gym bars or to the blackboard. □

by Wini Scheffler

## Breakfast at school: parents get involved

As with most school activities, one of the steps toward a successful food service program is getting parents involved. There are many ways to do this. But at Rockbridge Elementary School in Stone Mountain, Georgia, people use the most direct approach—they invite parents to have breakfast and lunch along with the students.

It all began 3 years ago, when the school started holding special luncheons for the children and their parents. To make the occasion more festive, the cafeteria was lit with candles (and the children cautioned to *be careful!*).

## Breakfasts prove popular

The "candlelight luncheons" were so successful that last year the

school also started hosting special breakfasts, primarily for working parents who couldn't attend the luncheons. The parent breakfasts are now a regular feature, popular with everyone—in fact, for the last one, over twice as many parents showed up as had been expected.

Even on regular school days, however, parents are welcome to join their children for breakfast or lunch. And every day a few of them do. Parents planning to have lunch with their children tell the school one day ahead, but no advance notification is needed for breakfast.

On an average day, about 125 students, several parents, and a few preschool-age siblings eat breakfast at Rockbridge.

Of course, parents pay the full cost of meals for themselves and their preschoolers. Their school-age children pay a lower price, made possible by the financial and donated food assistance the school receives through the School Breakfast Program.

### **Why do parents eat at school?**

One mother said she started eating breakfast at Rockbridge when her family moved there this year. She and her two preschoolers frequently join the family's two elementary school children for breakfast at school.

"I love it," she said. "This is the first time I've been involved in my children's school. I know the teachers."

Another mother explained why she eats breakfast at Rockbridge: "Number one, I'm with my son. The food is good, and I always run into someone I know." She noted that her husband, whose work requires

him to travel, often joins his son for a school breakfast whenever he's in town.

James Pearce, principal at Rockbridge, attributes the success of the program to the school food service staff in general, and to Miriam Dameron, the manager, in particular. She is always so easygoing," he said. "Nothing upsets her."

Perhaps that's due to her years of experience. Miriam Dameron has been manager at Rockbridge since the school first opened in 1972, and involved in school food service in DeKalb County since 1951. She was the first manager in the county to start a breakfast program, and when she came to Rockbridge, she brought the program with her.

"I feel it's a necessary service to the community," she said. "And I really don't find anything about the breakfast program difficult."

### **Plans on a monthly basis**

As she does with the lunch program, the food service manager plans the breakfasts for an entire month and sends menus home to the parents. In addition to traditional breakfast items, she occasionally serves foods like pizza or hamburger. "I feel that monotony has a lot to do with students not wanting to eat things," she said.

Breakfast preparation starts the afternoon before, with her staff putting bacon or sausage into pans, and partially cooking sweet rolls, biscuits, or rolls. The Rockbridge staff bakes all the breads for the program, including hot dog buns and loaf breads.

When Miriam Dameron arrives the next day at 6 a.m., she cooks all the food, placing enough in the warmer to serve all the children and adults. Occasionally she's assisted by her retired husband.

Her staff's regular hours are 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., but for 2 weeks at

a time, two of her workers are on the breakfast shift, arriving and leaving a half hour earlier. Breakfast is served from 7:40 to 8:20 a.m.

Although Dameron employs a part-time cashier for lunch, at breakfast she does her own cashiering. "That way I can come in close contact with the children and parents," she said.

Since the cafeteria is also used for other school activities, the food service manager takes this into consideration when planning the school's menus. For instance, if she knows there's going to be an assembly in the morning, she'll usually serve fruit, which the children are less likely to spill than juice. "But that comes with experience—and having to clean up," she said.



Rockbridge PTA president Anita Radosta helps Crystal Chayavadhanangkur open her milk.

### **"Sell the program"**

For those considering starting breakfast programs, Dameron has some advice to offer. First, she says, "sell" the program to the lunchroom staff. "Let them know why it's important." And, of course, sell the program to the principal.

Then, sell the program to the people in the community. "We did that by inviting them in," she noted, adding that when the program first began, she addressed the PTA.

As far as actually operating the breakfast program, Dameron advises managers to "keep the menus fairly simple when you start out, and serve foods you know children will like."

Finally, she said, make sure there is a cheerful atmosphere in the serving area. "But if you've sold the program to your staff, you've done that," she said.

### **Get children involved, too**

Ultimately, it's the children who must be "sold" on the program, and the Rockbridge people make special efforts to make sure they serve breakfast and lunches their customers will like.

For example, they usually offer children some kind of choice at lunch—either of the main dish, vegetable, or dessert. Although this slows down the serving line somewhat, it has helped increase participation.

The school also involves the children in menu planning. Two children in each fourth through seventh year class serve on a "taste panel" for 6 weeks at a time. Their job is to

taste unusual foods or new recipes and to tell the staff whether or not they like them. They also discuss new recipes in their classes and encourage classmates to taste them.

In the latter part of the school year, after they have finished studying their health units, the fourth-through seventh-year students actually plan breakfast and lunch menus, with each grade taking a different month.

First-, second- and third-year students are introduced to a variety of fresh vegetables and fruits through "tasting parties" held in their classrooms. Because eating lunch at school is a new experience for most first graders, the Rockbridge staff encourages parents to accompany their youngsters through the lunch-

line at the beginning of the school year. Parents help carry trays and open milk cartons, making their children feel more comfortable in the lunchroom.

### **Flexibility is important**

All these activities contribute to the success of the school food service program at Rockbridge, according to Principal James Pearce. But, he says, the most important ingredient is the staff running the program.

"That's the secret to the whole operation—the staff. They love children and what they're doing. Most of all, they are flexible. And with kids, you have to be."

*by Linda Klein*



Second grader  
Debbie Ethridge  
starts her day with  
breakfast at school.

# Tennessee Schools Prepare Summer Meals

**The Summer Food Service Program for Children was designed to continue, during the summer months, the food assistance provided needy children through the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. A school system in rural east Tennessee has shown how easily its school food service professionals can carry out this aim—using the same food delivery system that revitalized the county's school lunch program a few years ago.**

"When you're accustomed to feeding 7,000 children a day, feeding 320 on the summer program is easy!" says Virginia Campbell, school food service supervisor for Washington County, Tennessee.

For experienced school food personnel like Virginia Campbell, directing a summer program *is* easy. Although this was Washington County's first year operating the program, there were no problems.

The food service supervisor explains, "For one thing, we're familiar with the records and requirements—like production records, meal patterns, inventories, and reimbursement claims. If you're familiar with these, you already know most of what there is to learn."

The summer program cooks are cafeteria managers during the school year, so they understand school food service and are able to make quick decisions and solve problems. To learn the specific requirements for the summer program, they attended a 2-day training session conducted by Virginia Campbell.

A school system which functions as a summer program vendor has another advantage—eligibility for USDA-donated foods. Washington County used donated cheese, butter, peanut butter, and canned boned poultry in meals this summer. They also baked all the sand-

wich bread for the program, using donated shortening, flour, and non-fat dry milk.

## **Used system began in 1971**

Today, the Washington County school food service managers are experts in quantity food procurement, production, and delivery. But just a few years ago, they were struggling to keep their school lunch program alive.

The managers in the county's 15 individual school kitchens were facing many problems—obsolete equipment, inadequate storage facilities, vandalism, and—most critical of all—not enough money. "The managers kept getting deeper and deeper into financial trouble,"



This Washington County youngster enjoys a hearty noon meal of pizza, tossed salad, milk, and an orange.

Campbell said of the situation. "We were always cutting labor and changing menus just to survive."

They realized that they had to become more like a commercial food service operation. So, in 1971, the county began a satellite system of preparing and transporting lunches. Four of the county's school kitchens were converted into central preparation sites, complete with quantity cooking equipment, food storage facilities, and transporting equipment. The other schools were converted to receiving sites.

The satellite food delivery system solved many of Washington County's immediate problems and has resulted in greater control of food quality, less waste, substantial savings from centralized food buying, reduced equipment and labor costs, and simpler reporting. The system has also proved to be an excellent way to provide food service during the summer. Because the delivery system is so flexible, food service can be expanded or modified to accommodate the daily fluctuations in participation.

#### **One site served summer programs**

The Jonesboro Middle School was the summer preparation site serving recreation programs at six locations—Johnson City Girls Club, Bertha Ellis Girls Club, Johnson City-Washington County Boys Club, Daniel Boone High School, Davy Crockett High School and Duncan's Meadow Park. The availability of the program was announced in the local newspapers, and children from both the rural and urban areas of the county participated.

Helen Douglas, the program monitor, oversaw food-preparation daily and visited each feeding site at least once a week. The five kitchen workers drove the delivery vans and served as site coordinators during

the meal service.

"Our transport system really works. It's perfect for the summer program," Douglas said.

The transport carts can be heated electrically or rolled into the freezer and chilled. So, for the indoor sites, hot foods were prepared in large pans and placed in the heated carts. For the playground sites, lunches were assembled at the preparation site, packed in individual Styrofoam containers, and chilled. For both indoor and outdoor sites, milk was placed and transported in chilled transport carts.

#### **Meals included fresh produce**

Washington County used the cycle menus supplied by the Southeast Regional Office of the Food and Nutrition Service. The FNS regional office directly administers the summer program in Tennessee. In most States, the State department of education administers the program.

According to Virginia Campbell, the menus saved valuable planning time. They also provided some informal nutrition education by introducing some new foods to the children—foods that may not be in season during the school year.

FNS supplied two sets of menus for the summer programs administered by the regional office—one set for catered meals such as those from food management companies, and another for hot meals prepared at the site.

The Washington County staff used both menus. For example, on a day when they prepared pizza, tossed salad, oranges, and milk for the indoor meal service, they also prepared ham sandwiches, pickles, oranges, and milk for children at the park.

The menus were so well accepted by the children, Campbell said she decided to incorporate some of them into her regular school lunch

program cycle.

#### **Sponsorship had other benefits**

Sponsorship of the summer food service brought some other benefits to the school system. Not only did it provide summer jobs for the county's school food service managers, it also proved to be good training for them.

Campbell cited an example. "For the past few years we've been preaching about production records. Although the managers had kept these records, some had not really understood their usefulness. Actually seeing production records used for portion control to meet the summer meal requirements made believers out of them!"



School food service workers pack lunches in individual containers for children eating in the parks and playgrounds.

She continued, "Another thing we have found is that when we close our equipment down for the summer, it deteriorates. When we turn it on in the fall, we have all kinds of problems. So we're glad we can keep one kitchen's equipment running. Really, it's cheaper for us to use the equipment all summer than to repair it in the fall."

#### **Schools were asked to help**

Local need for the food program caused the school system to get involved. Ms. Campbell said, "During the summer months and in the winter when we were closed because of snow, we had lots of break-ins at school kitchens. Some milk or just a few cans of something would be stolen. The children were hungry, and I'm sure the parents went out to hunt food."

Darrell Crowe, executive director of the Johnson City-Washington county Boys Club, first approached the school system about providing food service for his summer recreation program.

"You wouldn't believe some of the home situations of these kids. This may be the only meal some of these kids get," Crowe said. "Before the food program started, we had kids coming in here at 8 in the morning and staying until 5 or 6 in the afternoon without eating."

The Washington County school food service staff felt that they had the equipment, the expertise, and, therefore, the responsibility to provide meals for the summer program. Their first year turned out to be a valuable learning experience for both the workers and the children participating.

Reflecting on the successful summer, Virginia Campbell said, "The things that pleased us most is that we fed those hungry little children we used to worry about all summer."

*by Anne Murray Sims*



Freshly packaged lunches arrive at Duncan's Meadow, and children eagerly help with unloading.

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